

GERALDINE FERRARO

*First woman to chair her party's 1984 platform committee
and first female vice-presidential nominee*



In 1956, when Geraldine Ferraro applied to Fordham University School of Law, an admissions officer warned her that she would be taking a man's place. She applied anyway. Ferraro worked full-time as a public school teacher, while attending Fordham at night - one of two women in a class of 179 students.

After passing the bar in 1961, Ferraro delayed practicing law full-time until after her children were older, though did pro bono work on behalf of women and got

involved in local politics. In 1970, she was elected President of the Queens County Women's Bar Association. In 1973, she went to work for the Queens District Attorney's Office; there, she helped create a Special Victims Bureau to prosecute sex crimes and crimes against the elderly and children.

In 1978, Ferraro ran for Congress, winning by a 10% margin. She was re-elected twice with larger margins. During her time in the House, Ferraro led efforts to pass the ultimately unsuccessful Equal Rights Amendment and also sponsored the Women's Economic Equality Act in 1984. Also that year, she was appointed chairwoman of the Democratic Platform Committee.

Responding to pressure to have a woman on the ticket, Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale selected Ferraro as his vice presidential running mate. They lost the election by a landslide.

Ferraro later served as ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission and as co-host of the CNN program "Crossfire." Ferraro lived to see women achieve more major milestones in national politics.